

Saturday 12 April 2025

Tsolov holds off Slater to take victory in epic Sakhir encounter

Nikola Tsolov came through the field before holding off the battling Freddie Slater to claim victory in the Sakhir Sprint Race, giving the Campos Racing driver a record-equalling fourth win in FIA Formula 3.

Slater had held the lead early on in his first race in F3 but wound up in second place ahead of ART Grand Prix rookie Tuukka Taponen – who also achieved his first podium in the Championship.

AS IT HAPPENED

It was a terrific start for the pole-sitter Joshua Dufek who kept a hold of the lead, but AIX's Slater got ahead of Martinius Stenshorne for P2 at Turn 4 after starting third.

Behind them, Tsolov got ahead of Alessandro Giusti for P4, while Championship leader Rafael Câmara had a slow start from P12 and dropped to the back of the field.

Onto Lap 2, and Slater closed in on Dufek before making a move for the lead at Turn 1. Behind them, Tsolov continued his fine start, overtaking Stenshorne for third at the same corner.

However, the Safety Car was called upon at the start of Lap 4. PREMA Racing's Ugo Ugochukwu stopped at Turn 2 after colliding with his teammate Brando Badoer, who pitted with a puncture. Racing resumed on Lap 7 and Tsolov was flying once more, diving to the inside of Dufek for P2 at Turn 1.

The battles intensified on Lap 9 as Tsolov again dived to the inside at Turn 1, this time on Slater for the race lead. However, the Campos driver went in too deep, allowing the Briton to retake the lead.

Just behind the pair, the battle for P3 was heating up as Dufek, Stenshorne and Taponen almost went three-wide into Turn 4. The latter two eventually made their way past at Turn 10 and 11, with Giusti following them through a few corners later at Turn 1.

Further up the road, Slater and Tsolov were going wheel-to-wheel once more. The Bulgarian dived down the AIX driver at Turns 4 and 8, but on both occasions, the debutant retook the lead.

However, Tsolov eventually made a move stick with the help of DRS and dived down the inside at Turn 1 again. Behind them, Taponen was now ahead of Stenshorne for P3.

CONTINUES

At the start of Lap 13 of 19, the top three had begun to separate themselves out in front, while Stenshorne was coming under attack from Giusti and Callum Voisin for P4.

Giusti then went side by side with Stenshorne into Turns 6 and 7, but the MP Motorsport driver had the door closed, putting him into the clutches of Voisin, who made a move past at Turn 11.

On Lap 15 of 19, the Safety Car was called upon, with Dufek and Ivan Domingues colliding at Turn 1, causing both drivers to stop by the side of the road.

We returned to green flag conditions at the start of Lap 18, and Slater was right on the back of Tsolov, but the Campos driver resisted all his overtaking attempts.

Onto the final lap, and Taponen looked to make a move on Slater into Turn 1, but could not make it stick. Tsolov though was able to pull away out in front and went on claim a record-equalling fourth victory in FIA Formula 3.

Slater held off Taponen to finish second, with Voisin in fourth ahead of Stenshorne. Tim Tramnitz overtook his teammate Giusti on the penultimate tour to take P6, while Christian Ho was eighth for Dams Lucas Oil.

TRIDENT rounded out the top 10 as Charlie Wurz finished in ninth ahead of Noah Stromsted.

KEY QUOTE – Nikola Tsolov, Campos Racing

“Good race, again a win for me in the Sprint. I think it was really difficult to be honest. I had to push a lot in the beginning to make up some ground from where we started in P5, and I think that compromised me a bit in the end but I got saved by the Safety Car, which was a little bit lucky because I was struggling a lot before that. I am really happy. I am so grateful to the team for their hard work, and the fans that came here, there was quite a few, so a lot of fans. Thank you everyone!”

CONTINUES

THE CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS

TRIDENT's Rafael Câmara stays at the top of the Drivers' Championship on 28 points, but with his fifth-place finish in the Sprint Race, Hitech TGR's Martinius Stenshorne is now up to second, just eight points behind. Noah Stromsted added to his points tally and now moves to third, tied on 19 points with Van Amersfoort Racing's Théophile Nael.

In the Teams' Standings, TRIDENT add three points to their total and stay top with 57 points, while Van Amersfoort Racing are second with 29. Two points behind them are AIX Racing in third, with Campos Racing fourth on 26, while Hitech TGR round out the top five on 20 points.

UP NEXT

The drivers have one more chance to score some big points this weekend as they prepare to return to the Bahrain International Circuit for Sunday's Feature Race at 12:55 local time.

CONTINUES

2025 FIA FORMULA 3 CHAMPIONSHIP – ROUND 2 SPRINT RACE PROVISIONAL CLASSIFICATION

	DRIVER	LICENCE	TEAM
1	Nikola Tsolov	BGR	Campos Racing
2	Freddie Slater	GBR	AIX Racing
3	Tuukka Taponen	FIN	ART Grand Prix
4	Callum Voisin	GBR	Rodin Motorsport
5	Martinius Stenshorne	NOR	Hitech TGR
6	Tim Tramnitz	DEU	MP Motorsport
7	Alessandro Giusti	FRA	MP Motorsport
8	Christian Ho	SGP	DAMS Lucas Oil
9	Charlie Wurz	AUT	TRIDENT
10	Noah Stromsted	DNK	TRIDENT
11	Noel Leon	MEX	PREMA Racing
12	Rafeal Camera	BRA	TRIDENT
13	James Wharton	AUS	ART Grand Prix
14	Louis Sharp	NZL	Rodin Motorsport
15	Mari Boya	ESP	Campos Racing
16	Laurens van Hoepen	NLD	ART Grand Prix
17	Matias Zagazeta	PER	DAMS Lucas Oil
18	Tasanapol Inthraphuvasak	THA	Campos Racing
19	Bruno Del Pino	ESP	MP Motorsport
20	Roman Bilinski	POL	Rodin Motorsport
21	Gerrard Xie	CHN	Hitech TGR
22	Brando Badoer	ITA	PREMA Racing
23	Javier Sagrera	ESP	AIX Racing

NOT CLASSIFIED

DNF	Joshua Dufek	AUT	Hitech TGR
DNF	Ivan Domingues	PRT	Van Amersfoort Racing
DNF	Santiago Ramos	MEX	Van Amersfoort Racing
DNF	Nicola Lacorte	ITA	DAMS Lucas Oil
DNF	Theophile Nael	FRA	Van Amersfoort Racing
DNF	Ugo Ugochukwu	USA	PREMA Racing
DNF	Nicola Marinangeli	ITA	AIX Racing

OVERALL FASTEST LAP

	Freddie Slater	GBR	AIX Racing
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OVERALL FASTEST LAP FOR POINTS

	Freddie Slater	GBR	AIX Racing
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ENDS